

Ask for Help

Asking for parenting help is a sign of a good parent! Each child is their own person, as is each parent, and parenting changes all the time. So, we all need different kinds of help and at different times. Sometimes, a quick look at a website will provide clarity and ideas. Others times, we need to talk to someone or attend a workshop on a particular topic. Many excellent resources exist in our community and beyond.

FAM (www.FAMrichmond.org) provides parenting and child development information, links to local family activities, contacts for local organizations that provide parenting support and education, a calendar of parenting workshops in the area and much more. FAM also partners with the 1-800-CHILDREN help line to provide answers for any of your parenting questions -- no question is too big or too small.

References and Acknowledgements

Child Development milestones from birth through 5 years old were taken from the Center for Disease Control's Act Early campaign. This material can be accessed at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/actearly>. The site contains helpful information about child development and positive parenting.

We would especially like to thank the Fairfax County Blue Ribbon Campaign Coalition. This Coalition produced a similar resource that served as an inspiration for the concept of this booklet.

This *Positive Discipline* booklet is provided through FAM: parenting central for father and mothers, friends and mentors and families like yours. FAM is a program of Greater Richmond SCAN (Stop Child Abuse Now). For more information, call 804 / 257-7226.

discipline

POSITIVE

Families are Magic



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Positive Discipline

We often think of discipline in terms of our reaction to our child's misbehavior; however, discipline is much broader than this. It is the on-going process of helping our children grow up to be responsible, compassionate and successful adults. Therefore, each day is a chance to teach our children the skills needed to become the kind of person we want them to be. There are many challenges along each parenting journey. Each child, and each parent, is different. This booklet is intended to help us to celebrate the joys and negotiate the challenges of parenting by addressing child development and discipline from birth through adolescence.

Discipline vs. Punishment

Most of us confuse discipline and punishment. We think of our reactions to situations (punishment) rather than our "master plan" of teaching our kids (discipline). Discipline is not without consequences. It doesn't mean that your children run all over you—that doesn't teach them the lessons they need to be successful in life. Discipline provides children with reasonable rules with reasonable consequences. Punishment may teach children not to engage in a certain behavior, but it doesn't teach them what to do instead. Punishment often results in kids being "sneakier" and craftier to avoid being caught. Punishment teaches fear; discipline teaches respect. Discipline strives to equip children with the tools they need to be successful, such as problem solving skills, accountability, empathy, and the ability to control strong emotions and express them appropriately.

Be a good role model.

Many of us were raised hearing our parents say, "Do as I say, not as I do." However, this does not work. We are our children's first and most influential teachers. They are watching us from day one and learn so much of how they interpret and react to the world through their careful observation of us! It is so important that we demonstrate the type of behavior we wish for our children to emulate. None of us are perfect, but each of us can work to be a better person. If we show our kids how we enjoy and appreciate life, we can give them a wonderful gift. Happy parents make happy children!

Some areas we may want to look at include:

Stress and Anger Management skills

How do I handle my stress and anger? If my child handles situations in the same way, would I correct him/her? If so, it might be a good time to learn some new skills in this area. Our world is a hectic place with a lot of demands, so many of us need help managing our stress and anger!

Self-Esteem

How do I really feel about myself? Are the feelings I have about myself ones that I would want my child to have? We don't want one of our child's first acts to be stepping on a scale or belittling his/herself! We live in a world that seems to expect perfection in most every domain – a standard none of us can meet. Learning to accept our limitations and celebrate our strengths is a good foundation for healthy self-esteem.

Communication

How do I communicate with my partner? My child? Other people? Do I need to be more assertive? Less assertive? Do I struggle to address conflict? Strengthening our communication skills enables us to help our children express themselves appropriately.

Interpersonal Relationships

Am I happy in my relationships? Children learn so much of how relationships work by watching us interact with our partners, family members and friends. Make sure that the relationships they witness are ones you would want for them in the future.

Sibling Rivalry

Sibling rivalry can be particularly challenging for parents. We find ourselves wondering, “Why can’t they just work it out and get along?” Sibling rivalry is very normal and can be helpful for kids.

Sibling rivalry happens for many reasons. Kids are competing for the most precious resource of all: your time and affection. Children are struggling to define themselves, learning to deal with conflict and strong feelings, trying to maneuver through our competitive society and have inherent differences that impact how they deal with the world and how we treat them (sometimes leading to favoritism and jealousy).

Through relationships with siblings, children learn to deal with jealousy, anger, conflict and disappointment. They also learn to share, cooperate, look out for another person’s well being and empathize.

Initially, we can model good anger and conflict management skills and teach these to our children. Help children deal with strong emotions in safe, healthy ways.

Each child has different gifts and challenges; comparing children will not change these but can intensify sibling rivalry and jealousy.

Also, examine why do you want to treat your children differently? Does your child remind you of your (or your partner’s, your mother’s, your father’s... you get the idea) good/ challenging attributes? These can really impact how we relate to our children and we should honestly reflect upon how they do.

Helping children learn to deal with conflict will help them within your house and throughout their lives. Try to recognize when conflict is developing and encourage your children to “work it out.” You will have to help with this process a great deal in the beginning but, as children strengthen their conflict resolution and problem-solving skills, your role will decrease.

Encouraging cooperation (rather than competition) within your family can also help. Make sure to praise them when they are getting along and playing well together — a little positive reinforcement can go a long way.

It can also help to have each child name things he/she *likes* and *dislikes* about his/ her sibling. This helps our children appreciate the strengths of their siblings (while also letting parents know that they do really love one another) while also giving them an opportunity to express their feelings.

Having some “special” alone time with each child can also help. Parents are busy, so it does not have to be an entire day or evening. Tuck in time at night can be ideal for this.

It’s never too late to change patterns of behavior that are not working for our families and to help our children get along better.

Babies (0-12 months)

Becoming a parent is one of the most wonderfully overwhelming experiences, but, sometimes, it is just overwhelming! Seeing your child’s first smile, first steps and other moments warms your heart and fills your soul with pride and love. But don’t underestimate the impact that chronic sleep deprivation, the changes that a child brings to your lifestyle and all the new responsibility that becoming a parent entails.

Development

You can stimulate your baby’s development in so many ways. Talking, singing and reading to your baby (from birth and beyond) help develop communication skills. Let your baby explore his/her senses by exposing him/ her to different textures, sounds, tastes, colors and more. Don’t worry about spoiling your baby. Responding to his/her cries teaches your child that you are reliable and will take care of him/her.

By 3 months

Your baby develops a social smile.
Raises head and chest when lying on stomach.
Watches faces intently.

By 7 months

Enjoys social play.
Transfers objects from hand to hand.
Babbles.
Rolls over.

Discipline

Meet your baby’s needs. We want our babies to learn they can trust us, we are there for them and we will keep them safe and take care of them. Accomplishing these tasks helps them to develop into the curious toddlers they will become.

Child-proofing your home is essential to discipline at this age. This keeps your child safe while also lowering your frustration. Worrying about your child breaking something, getting into poisons or constantly pulling items out of their mouth (since everything has to go there) will exhaust any parent. Making the environment safe for your child will minimize your stress and maximize their fun and learning.

Crying (which sometimes evolves into screaming) can affect any parent... especially since it is often paired with chronic sleep deprivation. Work to recognize your baby’s cues by learning when he/she is hungry, thirsty, tired or needs a diaper change. Even if you learn all these things, there are often times your child will just cry. Try to comfort him/her but take a break when you start to feel overwhelmed. Placing your child in his/ her crib to cry for five minutes so you can step outside to take a deep breath, call a friend or otherwise take care of yourself is good for both you and your baby.

Developing routines will help your child know what to expect and lower his/her stress (thereby lowering yours). Having predictable eating, napping/bedtime, and play schedules will benefit both you and your baby.

Toddlers (1 year to 3 years)

Oh, the world is a fascinating place to explore as a toddler! And, if you are the parent of a toddler, you know that he/she can do it without your help... at least that's what he/she tells you. Toddlers are learning to be independent, a skill they need in life, but experience a lot of frustration (as parents often do) during this time. They don't always have the skills they need, but they don't want to accept our help (you will go through this again when your child is an adolescent).

Development

1-Year-Olds

Sit, crawl and pull up to stand by holding onto furniture.
Bang objects together.
Respond to simple requests.
May say one or two words.

2-Year-Olds

Walk alone.
Point to an object or picture when named for him.
Begin make-believe play.
Demonstrate increasing independence.

Discipline

Child-proofing may need to become more sophisticated due to your child's burgeoning physical skills. Remember that child-proofing can lower your anxieties and frustration by providing a safe place for your toddler to play.

Allow outlets for all that energy. Kids need time to run and play to burn off **all** that energy.

Keep rules simple, be consistent and have predictable consequences. Kids at this age can follow simple requests (i.e. "No hitting," or "Feet on the floor.") but lack the ability to remember complex directions. They will need your constant support and redirection. Being consistent helps kids learn that you "mean what you say." Their limit testing will decrease once they realize you are not giving in to their requests.

Keep your cool. Losing your patience with your child is common during this stage as kids test the limits of their world. Model appropriate stress and anger management techniques.

Teach your child to manage his/her anger and other emotions. Being a good role model is the first step. Teach him/her relaxation techniques and other ways to stay in control of his/her feelings.

Spend time with your child. Misbehavior can result when children are seeking attention. Play, read and have fun with your children. It will curb their misbehavior since they will be too busy having fun with you!

Encourage your child's development and curiosity. Help him/her learn to manipulate and sort objects. Take him/her on nature walks and to new places.

Catch your child "being good" and ignore unwanted behavior (so long as it is not harmful or destructive) as much as possible. Focus your energy on what you *want* your child. At this stage, children love attention and demonstrate more acceptable behaviors overall when they receive praise for these.

Teenagers (13 years to 18 years)

Discipline

Keep lines of communication open. Teens may talk more to their friends about their problems during this stage of development but need to know their parents are there for them.

Know your teen's friends and their families. Stay involved. Know what they are doing on the computer, what they are watching on TV, what their interests are and what matters to them.

Continue to praise and support your teen. Teenagers experience the lowest self-esteem as compared to any other stage of child development. Their uncertainty about themselves and the world around them often results in negative feelings. They may not act like they appreciate your praise, but they need it (and secretly cherish your attention).

Respect your child's privacy but protect their safety. This is a fine line for any parent. Teens need privacy but safety is more important than privacy.

Create rules and consequences for violating rules with your teen. They may still moan that the rules are unfair... but involving them in the process often decreases this.

Help your teen develop realistic goals and strategies for achieving these. As teens prepare for the future, they need guidance from us in setting goals and figuring out how to attain them.

Learn about adolescence and talk to other parents of teens. Knowledge helps us to understand our teens, but we also need to know we aren't alone in dealing with our teenagers.

Teenagers (13 years to 18 years)

Teens are growing and finding their place in the world, and they need us to help them. Teens want to be independent of us but have not developed the skills they need to do so; therein lies the conflict of teens everywhere. Peer pressure intensifies; expectations increase; emotions rage; the future is impending; and no one understands.

Development

Physical

Puberty causes many physical changes in boys and girls. The growth spurt associated with puberty can add over a foot to a child's height while changing his/her body shape. Puberty can start as early as age 7 or 8. Girls will develop breasts and experience their first period. Boys will experience growth of their sexual organs and facial hair – and also have their voice change. Both will grow pubic and underarm hair and have oil and sweat-producing glands emerge.

Cognitive

Adolescents begin to think in new ways. Their reasoning skills increase as does their interest in social issues, values and ideas. They are able to understand more complicated topics. They will probably start to win debates with us during this stage of development with their increased cognitive abilities. Their thinking becomes more logical and their problem solving abilities become more sophisticated.

Social Development

Adolescents waver between independence and dependence. Testing limits is a part of this stage of development. With this, family conflict often increases. However, teens still love and need their families. The importance of peers increases at this stage – another sign of your teen's emerging independence. During early adolescence, most of your child's friends will be same-sex peers with similar interests. Friends become more diverse later in adolescence. Early adolescence is characterized with conformity while individuality is celebrated more in later adolescence. Peer pressure begins in early adolescence and continues throughout this stage.

Emotional Development

Adolescence is characterized by mood swings, inconsistent reliability, self-absorption and impulsivity. Your teen's raging hormones, peer pressure, uncertainty about his/her self and place in the world and the impending future are all components of this instability. They may experience abrupt mood and behavior swings and think more of themselves than others. Teens need assistance in negotiating these challenges from parents, peers and other loved ones.

Pre-Schoolers (3 years to 5 years)

"Why?" This is the question of each moment for a 3 to 5-year-old. Children this age really start to understand and question the world around them. The endless onslaught of questions can exhaust even the most patient parent but is essential for the child's development.

Development

3-Year-Olds

Climb well.
Turn book pages one at a time.
Use 4 to 5 word sentences.
Sort objects by shape and color.

4-Year-Olds

Go up and down stairs without support.
Draw circles and squares.
Tell stories.
Cooperate with other children.

5-Year-Olds

Swing, climb, hop and do somersaults.
Say name and address.
Can count 10 or more objects.
Like to sing, dance and act.

Discipline

Encourage your child's desire to "help" by assigning them chores around the house. Children this age can, with supervision and support, pick up their toys and begin to make their beds. They can start to take responsibility for their own hygiene. Praise your child for his/her skills and helpful behavior.

Give your child time to play with other children. This will help your child learn to cooperate and share. Friendships will start to emerge during this developmental stage.

Continue with clear, consistent rules with predictable consequences. Rules can become more complex but children will still need your support and supervision to complete tasks and follow rules. Chore and behavior charts can be helpful for children this age.

Teach your child safety rules. Kids this age start riding bikes/tricycles, playing in the pool, romping on the playground and other fun activities. They need to know basic safety rules to try to prevent accidents in these settings.

Teach your child to manage his/her anger and other emotions. Being a good role model is the first step to do so. Teach your child relaxation techniques and other ways to stay in control of his/her feelings.

Try to identify "triggers" for misbehavior. Kids, just like adults, who are hungry or tired often have a hard time getting along with others. Some children need warnings that a transition (i.e. "We are going to go in five minutes so let's start putting away the toys.") is about to occur while others make transitions with ease. Get to know your child so you can ward off some misbehavior. Reading your child's cues will lower your parenting stress and help your child adapt to the world better.

Pre-schoolers tend to develop a lot of fears (which fortunately pass quickly). Show that you understand your child's fears and help him/her conquer these. Praise your child for his/her bravery, strength and courage.

School-Age Children (6 years to 12 years)

Oh, how your child has grown! Children entering school is a big developmental milestone for children... and parents. Kids at this age become more concerned about friendships and their abilities (as spellers, runners, and the like). They start to care more about others and want to be liked by their peers and by grown-ups.

Development

Physical Development

Children in middle childhood (6-8) typically experience slower growth than previously seen. They will become more coordinated and exhibit greater skills (no longer needing kid size utensils and tools). Between 9-11 years old, most children will experience their growth spurt and enter into puberty. At this age, most children have lost all of their baby teeth and have honed their hand-eye coordination.

Social and Emotional Development

School-age children become more interested in their friendships and in being part of a team. They start to compete with their friends and begin to recognize their strengths and weaknesses (i.e. "I am a fast runner." or "I struggle with spelling."). Kids this age also start to see that parents make mistakes. They begin to understand right from wrong and develop their conscience. As middle childhood progresses, children start to worry more about "fitting in" and being accepted as part of a peer group. With this change, peer pressure can emerge.

Cognitive Development

Children at this stage of development start to think more logically. They begin to understand cause and effect. They become more creative. They develop considerable cognitive skills during this stage. They learn to read, to complete simple – and then more complex – mathematics, and many other skills during this stage.

School-Age Children (6 years to 12 years)

Discipline

Provide outlets for energy. After sitting in school all day, kids often need some time to run and play to burn off their boundless energy. Allowing some time for this will make getting their homework and other household chores done much easier.

Talk to your child. Having open communication lets your child know you are there to listen and help. Setting this foundation will make negotiating the teen years easier for both you and your child.

Be clear and consistent with your rules and consequences. School-age children can help you in developing rules/expectations for behavior and consequences. Working together to create rules helps children learn to be responsible and cooperative; it also increases their investment following rules and decreases arguments about consequences.

Be involved in your child's school and activities. Know who their friends are and what their interests are. Teach computer/Internet safety and monitor your child's computer usage.

Enhance your child's problem solving and conflict resolution skills. Talk about difficult topics and scenarios with your child. Sometimes, they will bring these to you; other times, something on the news or TV may prompt a conversation. Let your child come up with solutions/strategies for problems and weigh the pros and cons of each. Kids face difficult issues at younger ages these days; we want them to be equipped with the skills to handle them.

Have fun as a family. Strengthening your relationship by having fun together is good for parents and children.

Show your love for your child. Be affectionate and caring. Children at this stage worry more about friends and being accepted; a parent's unconditional support and love is their anchor during this time.